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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 KUWAIT 000557

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [KDRG](#) [PREL](#) [KTFN](#) [KU](#)
SUBJECT: S/CT DAILEY OFFERS CT COOPERATION; KSS DESCRIBES
CONSTRAINTS

Classified By: Ambassador Deborah K. Jones for reasons 1.4 b and d

Summary

¶1. (S) In separate meetings May 12 with Kuwait State Security (KSS) and MFA officials, on May 12, S/CT Dailey briefed on the USG paradigm of counterterrorism (CT) efforts and urged speedy and transparent information and intelligence exchanges and tighter border controls. S/CT Dailey also urged that the GOK not block a pending UNSCR 1267 designation of the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS). In response, KSS Director Muhaylan launched into an historical overview of what he assessed made Kuwait unique in terms of CT, complaining of the lack of CT legislation and the media's role in promoting extremism. "We don't see Al-Qaeda as Public Enemy Number One," asserted Muhaylan, listing instead Hezbollah, Iranians in Kuwait, and the potential spillover from Southern Iraq. He further blamed Kuwait's judicial system and its noisy democracy as obstacles in effectively confronting extremists. End Summary.

USG CT Paradigm

¶2. (S) In separate May 12 briefings with KSS and MFA, S/CT Dell Dailey, accompanied by AMB Jones, began by presenting the USG's approach to CT, describing a pyramid divided as follow: 'capture and kill' at the top 15 percent; disruption efforts the following 20 percent; and 65 percent focusing on 1) social diversity 2) economic success 3) political integration 4) religious persecution 5) ideological extremism.

Muhaylan's Historical Overview of 'Kuwait's Identity Crisis'

¶3. (S) In response, KSS Director Muhaylan launched into a lengthy review of Kuwait's historical CT challenges. Highlighting Kuwait's international make-up, he noted that there are 127 nationalities represented in Kuwait, and that the population of expatriates has exceeded the number of Kuwaitis for over 35 years. He explained that these large numbers of "outsiders" have had and maintain a high level influence on Kuwaiti society. In particular, he discussed how the influx of a half million Palestinians after 1948 "influenced the mentality" of Kuwaitis by introducing Ba'athism and Muslim Brotherhood ideologies. He noted that Kuwait had always been subject to the influence emanating from Iraq, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, and that the growth of extremism, militarism and fanaticism in these three immediate neighbors had compelled the GOK to take a unique approach to terrorism.

¶4. (S) Muhaylan suggested that Kuwait suffers from a cultural/religious identity crisis; 70% of Kuwaitis of Arabian peninsula descent adhere or look to Saudi tribal or

Wahhabi influence, while the nation's Arab Shi'a population looks to Marj'iyyah (religious reference points) in Najaf or Kerbala, Iraq, and its Persian Shi'a to Iranian institutions in Qom, Iran. He added that Kuwaitis had been seduced by Gamal Abdel-Nasser's Pan-Arabism, only to feel betrayed by Arabs, particularly Iraqis and Palestinians, when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990. Now, he concluded, Kuwaitis are struggling to define themselves in terms of the ongoing discussions of clashing civilizations.

Al-Qaeda not Public Enemy Number One

¶15. (S) As a result of this history, Muhaylan said "We don't see Al-Qaeda as Public Enemy Number One." Instead, he listed chief threats to Kuwaiti security as Hezbollah, Iranians in Kuwait, and potential spillover from Southern Iraq.

Impasse between Legislative and Executive Bodies

¶16. (S) As a defense of GOK failings on CT, Muhaylan explained that candidates in the upcoming May 17 elections are keeping KSS and other security services distracted by engaging in illegal primaries or vote-buying schemes. He lamented that the "parliamentary candidates are breaking the very laws that former MPs made." He indicated current clampdowns on election infractions are ineffective because although Kuwait has "good laws" on the books, the executive body lacks will and vision and the judicial body is ineffective.

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Need for Legislation/Press Promoting Voices of Extremists

¶17. (S) Muhaylan lamented the lack of adequate legislation to fight terrorism and stated that Kuwaiti courts are not equipped to prosecute terrorists since a dissolution of security courts after the 1991 liberation. He assessed that Kuwait's concern with speech and press freedoms has overridden state security and charged that local press plays an active recruitment role for young jihadists, citing sympathy-garnering interviews with former GTMO detainees as an example, as well as a recent local newspaper interview with UNSCR 1267 designee Mubarak Mishkhas Sanad Al-Bathali, for which Al-Bathali was allegedly paid 300 KD. (USD 1,125). (Note: Al-Bathali was arrested for his remarks and held for four days--the maximum one can be held without charge--and then released. End note). He complained, "We end up fighting the Ministry of Justice, and not the extremists."

Need for Speed and Transparency

¶18. (S) AMB Jones and S/CT Dailey stressed the need for stronger bilateral cooperation and sharing of information and intelligence. Explaining how extremists exploit governmental bureaucracies, through fast-moving technologies, i.e. the internet, S/CT Dailey urged Muhaylan to keep communication lanes open, reducing delays in sharing information from days to hours and minutes.

¶19. (S) While extolling recent Kuwaiti initiatives to combat money laundering, Dailey called for the GOK to expand its oversight into foreign charities that receive Kuwaiti donations and to deal directly with other nations where charities receive Kuwaiti funds. He called for increased support for the Kuwait Central Bank's Financial Intelligence Unit. He also extended offers of joint training at the national and regional level, showcasing the three most popular courses provided by the USG: cyber security, incident response, and leadership responsibility in crisis management.

RIHS Designation: "Individuals Gone Astray"

¶10. (S) Acknowledging that the GOK might not support a UNSCR 1267 designation of the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS, a Kuwait-based charity), and USG inability to release classified material that demonstrates RIHS connections to terror facilitation, Dailey urged that the GOK at least not block designation at the UNSC. KSS officers pushed back, noting that the RIHS was associated with the GOK and therefore any effort to designate would damage the GOK's reputation as well. Muhaylan argued that such designation might have been necessary 18 months earlier, but the GOK had since created a national oversight committee, with members from the Central Bank and Ministry of Finance. "Select individuals were the problem," Muhaylan said, 'not the institution itself." AMB Jones noted that this matter would be raised during the June 1 visit of Treasury Secretary Paulson.

Need for Tighter Controls

¶11. (S) AMB Jones concluded the meeting by reiterating the need for greater transparency and speedier communication between KSS and its Embassy liaisons. She urged tighter border security and stressed the need for GOK oversight and reviews of the status of all former GTMO detainees as well as jihadists known to have participated as foreign fighters outside of Kuwait.

MFA Response

¶12. (S) S/CT Dailey delivered the same brief to the MFA, eliciting from Ambassador Khaled Muqamis, Director of MFA's Follow-up and Coordination Department and Ambassador Ali Al-Sammak, Director of the Americas Department, a promise to contact the Ministry of the Interior and ask that Al-Bathali's passport be confiscated. (Note: The FM was tied up with the Lebanon crisis and unable to attend. End note.) Muqamis also stressed that the GOK would continue to monitor the former GTMO detainees and that the GOK was currently looking for a mechanism to integrate them back into society. He contended that the GOK is "very strict" and will take the issues conveyed seriously, noting that the GOK was

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seeking a means to circumvent parliament in establishing a rehabilitation center. (Note: AMB Jones informed these MFA officials that, per her previous conversation with KSS, Al-Bathali had been released from detention. End note).

¶13. (S/NF) The participants of the meetings, which took place at Kuwait State Security (KSS) Headquarters and MFA included:

U.S.
Ambassador Deborah K. Jones
Ambassador Dell Dailey S/CT
GRPO Head
Tom Rosenberger (notetaker)

KSS
MG Suleiman Al-Muhaylan, Undersecretary for State Security Affairs and de facto KSS Director
KSS Officers, names not provided

MFA
Ambassador Khaled Al-Muqamis, MFA Follow up and Coordination Department
Ambassador Ali Al Sammak, MFA Director, the Americas Department

¶14. (U) This cable has been cleared by S/CT Dailey.

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